

# **TRANSCRIPT**

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**FARM BILL HEALTHIER U.S. NUTRITION FORUM  
BEFORE UNDER SECRETARY ERIC BOST  
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA  
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2005**

BEFORE THE USDA:

ERIC BOST  
Under Secretary  
Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services

ALLEN NG  
Regional Administrator  
Food and Nutrition Service - WRO

CLARENCE CARTER  
Deputy Administrator - FSP

Oakland, California, Thursday, October 6, 2005

5                   YVONNE BEALS: Good morning, Under Secretary  
6   Eric Bost, Western Region USDA, Food Nutrition Service  
7   staff, and members of the audience.

8                   My name is Yvonne Beals, a community relations  
9   manager for the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano. I  
10   will be addressing food stamps and the need to create  
11   incentives for outreach at the federal level when  
12   addressing error rate relief.

13                  There are two ways to measure the success of how  
14   counties process food stamp certification periods and  
15   payment accuracy. The active error rate shows how many

16 dollars are different in benefits in overpayment to  
17 clients. The negative error rate shows how many clients  
18 are denied that should have actually received benefits.

19 The USDA only fines or penalizes the state based  
20 on the active error rate. The negative error rates are  
21 measured but the states and counties are not penalized  
22 for high percentage rates.

23 California had the highest negative error rate  
24 last year and has the third largest margin this year.  
25 The problem lies in the fact that states and counties can

1 minimize the active error rate by denying people with  
2 questionable eligibility whereby this raises the negative  
3 error rate fearing no fines or penalties from the state.

4           When considering this issue for the  
5 reauthorization of the 2007 Farm Bill please consider the  
6 following: One, USDA should consider both active and  
7 negative error rates when defining success by states and  
8 counties. Most states are sanctioned on the basis of  
9 their active error rate. With that said, for most states  
10 the highest problem is the negative error rate which is  
11 the main factor that discourage counties when approving  
12 new claims. This is a build-in disincentive that will  
13 continue to perpetuate the problem of low enrollments.

14           Two, USDA should provide 100 percent funding,  
15 not just match funds, to states and counties for outreach  
16 efforts, particularly when counties actively pursue  
17 outreach efforts. For example, Contra Costa County has  
18 recently made food stamp applications available to  
19 potential clients by partnering with community based  
20 organizations who service low income and potential food  
21 stamp eligible clients. This cost to the county should  
22 be at the very least reimbursed.

23           By way of acknowledging such outreach efforts  
24 that result in more clients receiving benefits, the  
25 consideration for increased funding for those counties

1     who in turn have reduced active and negative error rates,  
2     this creates a greater incentive for those counties to  
3     operate and sustain outreach programs. This would  
4     eliminate the existing budgetary constraints for those  
5     who are currently struggling to manage the employee  
6     shortfalls.

7             Three, bonuses should go to those states that  
8     agree to spend top dollars on outreach plans. Currently  
9     California has only one agency committed to food stamp  
10    outreach through the efforts of California Nutrition  
11    Network. Perhaps if there were more federal dollars  
12    appropriated to more than one dedicated source, more  
13    efforts could result in an increase in outreach efforts  
14    reaching the goal of increased client enrollment.

15            Four, incentive to increase food stamp benefits.  
16    Currently the minimum food stamp benefit is \$10.00. The  
17    problem with this minimum is that it discourages the  
18    county from processing applications as well as it being a  
19    disincentive for clients to endure the complexities of  
20    the application process with little result.

21            And lastly, five, an attempt to align federal  
22    safety net programs with federal nutrition programs rules  
23    and guidelines. The simplification of regulations and  
24    methods for improved coordination of eligibility  
25    requirements between welfare programs and nutrition

1 programs would result in the creation of stronger  
2 alliances between the programs. In addition, any changes  
3 that affect the food stamp budget impacts other programs.  
4 And currently this consideration is not being considered  
5 but has a direct impact to the clients and those agencies  
6 administering the programs. Thank you very much.

7 ALLEN NG: If you're going to read your  
8 testimony simply just summarize it and give it to the  
9 stenographer. If you have written testimony we're going  
10 to capture 100 percent of that. And if you're going to  
11 talk and summarize the testimony and make certain points  
12 certainly the stenographer will be able to capture that.

13 ERIC BOST: There's no need for her to type  
14 everything if it's written down. We can just give it to  
15 her. She's going to get tired.

16 (The next speaker asked to not be reported  
17 since she was reading verbatim.)

18 NICK URBAN: Nick Urban, and I am the education  
19 and outreach coordinator for the San Diego Hunger  
20 Coalition. We are a network of organizations across San  
21 Diego County serving low income populations and seeing  
22 firsthand both the great need for food stamps to fight  
23 hunger locally and the positive effects they can have  
24 for working parents and children. We are grateful to  
25 have the opportunity for input on the 2007 Farm Bill.

1           Living on the border we are particularly  
2   concerned about our immigrant neighbors that are going  
3   hungry or are at risk for hunger. The recent gains for  
4   immigrants must be maintained and built upon. As such we  
5   strongly urge that no changes are made to the food stamp  
6   program that disqualifies even a single immigrant that is  
7   currently eligible.

8           Information whether true or false spreads  
9   quickly and fades slowly in these communities. Food  
10  stamp policy, implementation, and attitudes must be  
11  consistent and positive toward immigrants before they  
12  apply, during the application process, and while they are  
13  enrolled. There needs to be a stronger message from the  
14  top levels of government down to local employees that  
15  deal with immigrants daily that food stamps are  
16  absolutely not a public charge and will not be considered  
17  in any way in the process of becoming a U.S. citizen.

18           Also any consideration of sponsors should be  
19  totally removed from the program. Inconsistent access to  
20  a healthy diet and hunger within a household are harmful  
21  and offensive whether members of that household are  
22  immigrants with sponsors or not. The implications of  
23  sponsor deeming, pay back, and the indigence exception  
24  are confusing for potential applicants, counties, and  
25  food stamp supporters.

1           This confusion can be very intimidating and is  
2 discouraging many of our neighbors in San Diego from  
3 applying. Serving a county with a large number of  
4 immigrants and low food stamp participation we know that  
5 access barriers that deter other eligible families from  
6 applying are even more detrimental to non-citizens.

7           As immigrants overwhelmingly come to America to  
8 work they suffer when food stamp offices are not open  
9 extended hours or are difficult to get to. Non-citizens  
10 are also more likely to have difficulty gathering all the  
11 required documents for an initial visit to the office and  
12 to feel that a complicated application process is set up  
13 to prevent participation. They are more easily  
14 discouraged when overburdened eligibility workers do not  
15 have the time and resources to provide positive customer  
16 service or fully explain why a family may have been  
17 denied or had their benefits reduced.

18           Finally, just one 16 square mile neighborhood in  
19 San Diego, City Heights, has at least 35 primary  
20 languages spoken. This neighborhood alone illustrates  
21 the continued need for outreach and other resources  
22 available in a great diversity of languages and with  
23 broader considerations of cultural practices and  
24 perceptions of food stamps in immigrant communities. It  
25 is our recommendation that these special needs of

1 immigrants are considered as we look for ways to  
2 strengthen the food stamp program in the future. Thank  
3 you.

4 LINDA STONE: I'm Linda stone of the Children's  
5 Alliance, Washington State. Thank you for the  
6 opportunity to speak today. The children's alliance is  
7 a membership-based multi-issue child advocacy  
8 organization. I have been working to end hunger in  
9 Washington State since 1986. Increasingly both  
10 childhood hunger and obesity are central to our efforts  
11 to make sure the kids have opportunities. I am going to  
12 restrict my comments today to the Food Stamp Program or  
13 as we call it in Washington State the Basic Food  
14 Program.

15 We recently an organization called Healthy  
16 Mothers, Healthy Babies. We just started a toll-free  
17 hotline for food assistance in Washington. They did a  
18 Medicaid insert and letters that went out in June and  
19 they had a phenomenal response, 13,000 calls in the first  
20 month. The insert advertised the Basic Food Program  
21 which is what we call it officially in Washington.

22 Many, many, many of the calls received by this  
23 hotline thought this was a new program in addition to the  
24 Food Stamp Program. And when the operation of the  
25 hotline told people, no, we're talking about the Food



1 Stamp Program, they got really compelling information and  
2 stories from families saying we still don't have enough  
3 to eat. Our benefits ran out before the end of the  
4 month. We're trying to purchase healthy diets for our  
5 children but it's impossible.

6 After 20 years of working on hunger it's  
7 discouraging to feel like despite the best efforts of the  
8 USDA and of the 2002 Farm Bill to try to finetune the  
9 Food Stamp Program to work in families that there are  
10 still many, many families where it's not the response it  
11 should be.

12 You had asked in the guidelines for this  
13 testimony to talk about programs strengths and  
14 weaknesses. Particularly through the hurricane response  
15 the fact that it's a national program it was phenomenally  
16 important, the fact that states were on the Medicaid side  
17 having to go through way more complexity to figure out  
18 how to handle refugees. The Food Stamp Program was a  
19 national program. That's key, the fact that it's an  
20 entitlement program and can be responsive to these kinds  
21 of crises as well as to changes in economic situations in  
22 our states.

23 The program also puts resources into the hands  
24 of hungry families and then they go right into local  
25 economies. That is very important and a real strength to

1 the program. And frankly, the program is has been shown  
2 improved nutritional intake. We need to remember that  
3 and realize this is a cornerstone program.

4 The weaknesses are substantial however. The  
5 benefits are often too little and often too late. When  
6 you have barriers like asset tests, families come in late  
7 and then the amount of benefits are aren't high enough.  
8 There is increased recognition that the benefits of the  
9 program do not support a healthy diet. We're still  
10 basing it on the food plan. What was that?

11 So I have a lot of recommendations. They're all  
12 written down here. I have to spend a minute on  
13 eligibility because the proposed changes that we  
14 understand the Senate is working on today will have a  
15 major impact on Washington and Oregon. Many of our  
16 members are here today.

17 And I think that what became of the 2002 Farm  
18 Bill was really some deliberate and good efforts to try  
19 to make the program work for working families. To  
20 restrict category of eligibility is taking a step  
21 backward. I do very much appreciate the opportunity to  
22 speak.

23 And the other question that I can't resist  
24 saying is that we talked about offsets. And for me the  
25 major offset is that we end tax breaks to people had who

1 don't have to worry about where the next meal comes from.  
2 That's where we get the funds to make this program work  
3 for low income families. Thank you.

4 JUDY LENTHALL: Aloha. My name is Judy  
5 Lenthall. I'm the executive director of the Kauai Food  
6 Bank in the State of Hawaii. My testimony concerns the  
7 proposed rules for the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition  
8 Program published in the Federal Register on May 26,  
9 2005.

10 We have been participating in this outstanding  
11 program since its inception in 2001. Without a doubt it  
12 is one of the best programs that the USDA has to offer,  
13 and is probably the only source of affordable fresh  
14 produce available for our poverty seniors. Mahalo for  
15 this tremendous program.

16 However, if the proposed rule becomes final it  
17 will have a devastating effect on the health of Hawaii's  
18 poverty seniors and have a significant impact on their  
19 nutritional health and wellbeing. Specifically, I'm  
20 referring to the proposed limitation of an  
21 across-the-board maximum annual benefit of \$50 for each  
22 qualified senior. Currently the annual benefit level per  
23 Hawaii poverty senior is \$294. Our participating seniors  
24 live on an average of only \$9,500 annually.

25 The proposed reduction would mean a loss of over

1 2.5 percent of their total average annual income. No one  
2 earning this level of income can take a loss of any  
3 amount particularly given Hawaii's high cost of living.  
4 The proposed rule if adopted would mean a loss of over  
5 \$278,000 in annual federal funding to our state. And  
6 unfortunately neither the state of our counties can make  
7 up this tremendous loss.

8           Consequently, we have tried to make this point  
9 known to Patricia Daniels, director of the Supplemental  
10 Food Programs Division by the mandated deadline for  
11 Federal Register comments, which was July 25, 2005.  
12 Formal comments to this terrible legislation have also  
13 been submitted by the mayor of Kauai County, the mayor of  
14 Hawaii County, the State Office of Community Services,  
15 the Hawaii State Office on Aging, the Kauai Office of  
16 Elderly Affairs, the Kauai Farm Bureau, 11 growers, the  
17 Kauai Food Bank, the Hawaii Island Food Bank, and the  
18 Western Regional Anti-Hunger Coalition.

19           Over 2,000 signed petitions from poverty seniors  
20 in Hawaii have been submitted to Ms. Daniels in direct  
21 response to the proposed regulations. All of them are  
22 begging the USDA not to cut their Senior Farmers Market  
23 Nutrition Program benefits. Letters signed by every  
24 member of the Hawaii congressional delegation have been  
25 submitted to Ms. Daniels requesting that USDA either

1 exempt Hawaii from the proposed \$50 cap or provide a  
2 grandfather clause in the final rule to permit Hawaii to  
3 use the 2004 benefit levels as a monetary cap.

4 All of these petitions, letters, and requests  
5 are attached to my testimony today and apparently all of  
6 them have fallen on deaf ears. There seems to be a  
7 belief in Washington D.C. that a one-size senior produce  
8 program will fit all. And no matter how much evidence we  
9 provide to the contrary we are filled with tremendous  
10 fear that no one is really listening.

11 I flew a long way here today because I know  
12 Mr. Bost will listen. Evidence includes Hawaii's and  
13 particularly Kauai's extremely high cost of living  
14 estimated at the very least at over 35 percent higher  
15 than on the mainland. Evidence includes the economic and  
16 nutritional impact on our participating seniors, Hawaii's  
17 geographic uniqueness and the programmatic implications  
18 therein Hawaii's year-round growing season, and the  
19 rule's adverse impact on Hawaii's growers.

20 In California you can get a large ziplock bag  
21 full of Roma tomatoes for about three or four dollars.  
22 In Hawaii three dollars will get you maybe three or four  
23 tomatoes, tops. A gallon of milk in Hawaii is about  
24 \$6.30.

25 The bottom line is one size will not fit all

1 when it comes to Hawaii's cost of living. The State of  
2 Hawaii Office of Community Services has prepared an  
3 eight-page report documenting the evidence and impact the  
4 proposed rule will have on Hawaii and this too is  
5 submitted with my written testimony.

6 It would be greatly appreciated if the  
7 department would recognize the fact that Hawaii is very  
8 unique geographically, economically and has  
9 transportation and administrative problems that are  
10 endemic only to Hawaii. Please consider lifting the  
11 unreasonable \$50 maximum annual cap for Hawaii seniors.

12 The two alternatives we have proposed include  
13 exempting Hawaii from the proposed \$50 cap or allowing  
14 Hawaii to cap its annual individual monetary benefit  
15 level at the 2004 amount by grandfathering this allowance  
16 into Hawaii's Senior Produce Program.

17 Thank you for the opportunity to speak before  
18 you today. I pray that you will consider our request for  
19 the benefit of Hawaii's poverty seniors. Mahalo nui loa  
20 and aloha me ke pumehana.

21 JENN LEE: I'm Jenn Lee (phonetic) from  
22 Arizona. Our seven-member food banks this past year  
23 provided .147 million pounds of food to more than a  
24 million hungry Arizonans. That's a combination of USDA  
25 commodities as well as purchased food, donated food, et

1     cetera. Because of this grave need, we feel it's  
2     imperative that we lift up our voices on behalf of the  
3     hungry that we serve in Arizona regarding the  
4     discussions in preparation for the 2007 Farm Bill.

5             We have long been committed in Arizona's food  
6     banking community to good nutrition, balanced food boxes  
7     and providing the very best choices we could. And  
8     developing our program and so on for fresh fruits and  
9     vegetables have helped to model to the low income people  
10    we serve what they may be able to provide for themselves  
11    once they achieve food security and step into that realm.

12            There are a few points I'd like to make and I  
13    will provide additional written testimony for you later  
14    on after the hearing. I want to start out with the TEFAP  
15    program. It's a critically important program. Over  
16    130,000 people a month in our state receive benefit from  
17    it. At a minimum we would hope you would maintain that.  
18    At the very best, increase the food volume and the  
19    funding and the variety.

20            The funding especially because of increased fuel  
21    costs that have hit our food banks very hard. Just in  
22    the past when I combined the fuel cost that we spent in  
23    Arizona for July and August it was at 20 percent increase  
24    in fuel cost to transport TEFAP product just within two  
25    months compared to the previous year.

1           Those are things that need to be taken into  
2   account. In terms of food stamps I want to point out  
3   that in our state eligibility workers at the state level  
4   because of actions by the state legislature have been cut  
5   back. We don't have as many. So it will be really  
6   important to take that into consideration. We're not the  
7   only state that has done that. If we can't process  
8   applications for food stamps, we can't get people on food  
9   stamps.

10           And so looking at that mix of how eligible  
11   workers will be funded, whether state or federal or some  
12   combination of both will need to take place. Food stamp  
13   outreach is working in our state. We are proud to say  
14   we're little over 68 percent participation. When we  
15   started a few years back we were below 50 percent. And  
16   we thank you for that. But it needs to continue.  
17   Without having that outreach federally I don't know  
18   that -- although we have been able to get a little money  
19   in Arizona for that at the state level, we have not been  
20   able to convince our legislature as we would like to make  
21   some commitments in that area.

22           Also in this same concept if you could make  
23   sure that we do really good outreach at the federal  
24   level about the public charge issue. Being a border  
25   state we are consistently met with misinformation among



1 low income people that could potentially benefit. The  
2 food distribution program on Indian reservations is one  
3 I'd like to also lift up quickly. They need help in  
4 building up-to-date warehouses that can handle fresh  
5 fruits and vegetables. Their population is at risk.  
6 They need that support. So if there could be something  
7 written in to one-time support for adding freeze or  
8 refrigeration capacity, then they could accept fresh  
9 produce.

10 ERIC BOST: Elaborate on the public charge  
11 comment.

12 JENN LEE: Many of the immigrant folks who can  
13 meet the qualifications for food stamps are coming and  
14 saying to our food banks, well, I can't apply because I  
15 may have to pay that back if I want to become a citizen.  
16 And even though we try to say no, that's not the case,  
17 the public charge concept is if an immigrant family  
18 steps forward and takes funds from the federal  
19 government they may have to pay that back before their  
20 immigration or citizenship is approved.

21 It's misinformation that is out there. I know  
22 the Food Stamp Program is not under the public charge  
23 rule

24 ERIC BOST: You have your own challenges with  
25 your own law too.

1           JENN LEE: We do. As an advocate, Mr. Bost I'm  
2 working day and night on that. Thank you very much.

3           ERIC BOST: You know, I made my feelings clear  
4 to your state about that too.

5           JENN LEE: Yes, I hope you will continue to do  
6 so.

7           KIM MCCOY WADE: I'm Kim McCoy Wade with the  
8 California Association of Food Banks. As you know, we  
9 have the only food bank partnering with about two dozen  
10 food banks and non-food banks to do food stamp outreach.  
11 That experience had led us to several recommendations.  
12 I just want to say upfront the California Association of  
13 Food Banks is going to focus on four programs. I'm  
14 going to talk about food stamps. My colleague will talk  
15 about the EFAP program, FSNE program, and something we'd  
16 love to see, a farm-to-food bank, if you will, to build  
17 and get more healthy food flowing through, the big  
18 enchilada, if you will.

19           There's three things we see as continuing  
20 challenges. They're not going to be a surprise. One is  
21 access. California has not had the success of other  
22 states, like Florida.

23           Finally, a moment where we have seen the program  
24 in the light of Katrina work so well for so many people.  
25 I just came back myself from Mobile, Alabama where over

1 the weekend Mobile County was giving out emergency food  
2 bags to the people at the Civic Center. People were  
3 coming from all over, and police were there to make it go  
4 smoothly. There was a make-up day and weekend hours.

5 I thought gosh, wouldn't it be great if the kind  
6 of access we have for the disaster program we had every  
7 day for people having personal disasters in their own  
8 life? If we can just take a moment in the light of all  
9 the success of Katrina and see what else we can learn  
10 from that and make that same ease of access available to  
11 all Americans, that would be great. Thanks.

12 JULIA MARTINEZ: Good morning. I'm Julia  
13 Martinez. I'm the Food Stamp Program specialist for  
14 Alameda County. Alameda County is one of California's  
15 most diverse counties. It is home to 1.5 million  
16 individuals of which 50,000 -- excuse me, 57,162  
17 individuals receive food stamps in our county. Even  
18 though we have -- Alameda County has not received a cost  
19 of living for the basic administration of the Food Stamp  
20 Program, in the past couple of years we have managed to  
21 increase our non-assistance food stamp population by  
22 42 percent.

23 To accomplish this we were working closely with  
24 our community partners including but not limited to our  
25 Alameda County Food Banks, WIC, clinics, and schools. So

1 our community partners assist us quite a bit in this  
2 outreach. We provide training to these individuals, give  
3 them screening techniques, and we also meet quarterly to  
4 discuss how we can continue to improve our outreach  
5 efforts. We are fully committed to increasing our local  
6 participation in the Food Stamp Program. However, we  
7 need your help to be more effective.

8           Accordingly, we recommend you allocate funding  
9 for outreach to areas that have low participation rate  
10 without requiring a match. This would enable local  
11 jurisdictions to hire much needed eligibility outreach  
12 workers and assign them to the various community based  
13 organizations. It would also improve customer service  
14 and allow our workers to better expedite those  
15 applications.

16           We would also like to allow us to have a state  
17 option to waive the face-to-face requirement. Alameda  
18 County has a large population of households that work  
19 whose income is under 130 percent of the poverty limit.  
20 The face-to-face requirement prohibits many of our  
21 working poor families to come in and apply in our office.

22           Although we are currently working on this option  
23 with the State, we know that ultimately you have the  
24 power to approve this. Also we have heard this over and  
25 over again. Working inside and trying to process these

1 applications the change in the sponsor non-citizen  
2 deeming role, if we could have something like a five-year  
3 limit instead of a lifetime limit, that would help  
4 tremendously.

5 Alameda County has a large population of legal  
6 non-citizens that have a variety of statuses for their  
7 residency. Having a simplified regulation for legal  
8 non-citizens would help both with administering the  
9 program and also help to increase our participation.  
10 Thank you.

11 JAN SCHILLING: Good morning. I'm Jan  
12 Schilling. I'm a registered dietitian, public health  
13 nutritionist in El Cerrito and Richmond in Contra Costa  
14 County and a member of the American Dietetic  
15 Association. The issue I'd like to speak to today is  
16 the public need for an uncompromising commitment from  
17 the government to advance nutrition knowledge and to  
18 help people apply that knowledge to maintain and improve  
19 their health.

20 Millions of Americans benefit from the USDA Food  
21 Assistance Program. We still see hunger in the U.S. And  
22 co-existing with that hunger is the national epidemic of  
23 overweight and obesity. In fact, overweight and obesity  
24 is the largest manifestation of malnutrition in the  
25 United States today.

1           The next Farm Bill, 2007, needs to address four  
2 key issues: One, USDA's Food Assistance Programs must be  
3 adequately funded and available to those in need. Two,  
4 improving the nutrition status of all Americans needs to  
5 rise in priority in food assistance programs, other food  
6 programs, and truly for all Americans.

7           Three, increased investment in nutrition  
8 education and nutrition research is necessary and it must  
9 be sustained. Four, having up-to-date knowledge in the  
10 nutrition composition of the food supply is essential for  
11 all work in food, nutrition and health to bare fruit.

12           If we expect consumers to take personal  
13 responsibility for making healthy choices, then we have a  
14 responsibility to make sure they are adequately prepared.  
15 The government must invest in nutritional research and  
16 nutrition education necessary to give Americans the  
17 knowledge and ability to make their own nutrition  
18 decisions.

19           These nutrition recommendations and programs for  
20 the public must be based on sound science. Only the  
21 federal government has a public mandate and the resources  
22 to carry out unbiased research on human nutrition needs  
23 and to develop dietary guidance that forms the basis for  
24 all nutrition programs.

25           We believe federal research exploring the

1 relationship between diet and particularly dietary  
2 patterns and health is very important. So my question in  
3 conclusion is what does the USDA plan to include in this  
4 Farm Bill proposal to strengthen the human research and  
5 nutrition education in USDA programs? Thank you very  
6 much.

7 LEO O'FARRELL: Good morning. My name is Leo  
8 O'Farrell. I manage the Food Stamp Program in San  
9 Francisco. Last year we were able to issue over  
10 \$38 million in food stamps across the Bay and San  
11 Francisco. In our office we operate under the motto of  
12 access, benefits and customer service. We're very  
13 pleased with the direction the Food Stamp Program is  
14 going. We think the changes in 2002 did a remarkable  
15 job around immigrants, helping elderly and disabled  
16 households with a higher resource limit and some income  
17 solutions.

18 However, at the same point we have learned that  
19 over 170,000 people in San Francisco -- it's a community  
20 of 800,000 people -- don't have enough food. They have a  
21 level of food and security. So we realize we have a long  
22 way to go. I'm an operational manager. I work in the  
23 office. There's three points I'd like to make. One, the  
24 drug felon rule is very tough to administer.  
25 California's made some changes. A bunch of states have

1 made changes. But our eligibility workers say it's  
2 really tough to give a person that news. They have been  
3 tried, convicted, punished. Now they can't get food  
4 stamps.

5 The ABAWD rules are also similarly very  
6 difficult to track. It's a lot of eligibility worker  
7 time from county to county. We don't know what their  
8 work history is. It's very, very difficult. So we'd  
9 like to remove that rule.

10 For low-income individuals and working  
11 low-income families the resource rule is very difficult  
12 for them to comply with. They may comply on an income  
13 basis, but they have too much money, \$2,000. They have  
14 more than that, and they can't get food stamp. So that's  
15 a very tough rule.

16 Once people are on food stamps I'd like to  
17 recommend just three more points. First, that the child  
18 care limit be increased. In fact, all of the limits that  
19 go into making up the understanding allotment should be  
20 adjusted. Second, the homeless shelter allowance is very  
21 difficult to apply. Does the person pay for shelter?  
22 Will they pay, might they pay at some point? It's prone  
23 to QC errors as well. We dinged for errors.

24 Finally, the elderly disabled in California, if  
25 their income is above the SSI level they can get food



1 stamps, but because of that income level they get very  
2 few. So it's a lot of hassle, a lot of questions for a  
3 very small benefit.

4 Overall we're pleased with the direction the  
5 Food Stamp Program is going in. We hope you can make  
6 some more adjustments and changes in this coming Farm  
7 Bill. Thank you for the opportunity.

8 DESIREE BACKMAN: Good morning. I'm  
9 Dr. Desiree Backman, manager of the California 5 a Day  
10 campaign. Today I'm representing the Public Health  
11 Institute. Thank you for inviting us to discuss  
12 priority issues and policy options for food assistance  
13 programs being reauthorized through the 2007 Farm Bill.

14 I'll provide three overarching recommendations  
15 and a subset of complementary recommendations for the  
16 Farm Bill. First, the 2007 Farm Bill should modernize  
17 provisions for food stamp nutrition education to  
18 appropriately address the needs of today's food stamp  
19 households and establish food stamps as the nutrition  
20 solution to the obesity epidemic impacting low-income  
21 families.

22 The 2007 Farm Bill should support food stamp  
23 nutrition education that reaches certified, likely and  
24 potentially eligible food stamp households defined with  
25 those with incomes up to 185 percent of the federal

1 poverty level. Program flexibility should allow for  
2 fluctuating incomes of low-income families and fixed  
3 expenses such as housing, transportation, and utilities  
4 that can make working poor households intermittently  
5 eligible for food stamps.

6           It should provide FSNE programs in many  
7 different community locations that reach high proportions  
8 of FSNE eligible persons where food and physical activity  
9 decisions are made. Current provisions preclude FSNE  
10 from being offered to the nearly two thirds of FSNE  
11 eligible adults who live outside qualifying low-income  
12 census tracts even in the grocery stores where the  
13 majority of food stamps are spent or in low-wage work  
14 sites which are effective, efficient sites for delivering  
15 nutrition and physical activity interventions.

16           If current law does not provide USDA with the  
17 flexibility it needs to allow more flexible targeting in  
18 the states, then that authority should be added to the  
19 Farm Bill. It should include effective physical activity  
20 and community food security interventions as well as  
21 those for healthy eating and address the community  
22 barriers that FSNE eligible populations are facing as  
23 part of a comprehensive FSNE program.

24           It should promote use of scientifically sound,  
25 low-income targeted approaches that include mass media

1 advertising, public relations, marketing and promotion,  
2 community development, public and private partnerships,  
3 and policy systems and environmental change as well as  
4 traditional education.

5           This combination approach is necessary to  
6 promote healthy behavior, denormalize unhealthy  
7 conditions, and create environments where healthy eating  
8 and physical activity become easy, safe, enjoyable  
9 choices for low-income communities. And it should  
10 support effective program delivery by embracing and  
11 capitalizing on the respective assets and interests of  
12 each level of government participating in FSNE, insure  
13 flexibility to meet regional, state, and local needs and  
14 break through unnecessary silos that limit program  
15 performance.

16           Second, the 2007 Farm Bill should eliminate the  
17 administrative firewall that separates food stamp  
18 nutrition education from outreach to insure streamline  
19 participation in nutrition assistance programs for  
20 low-income families. The present restriction on using  
21 available FSNE dollars for food stamp outreach and  
22 promotion or to help increase participation in the other  
23 nutrition assistance programs that serve food stamp  
24 families, like school lunch and breakfast, summer meals,  
25 and after-school snacks limits program effectiveness and

1 efficiency. Removing the firewall would promote  
2 coordination, improve efficiency, and increase  
3 participation by families who better need access to  
4 healthy food.

5           The federal nutrition assistance programs are  
6 under-utilized in California. FSNE is in place and can  
7 serve as a natural and efficient means to promote other  
8 FNS programs and reach out to eligible Californians.

9           Third, the 2007 Farm Bill should be designed to  
10 maximize the successful adoption of the 2005 Dietary  
11 Guidelines for Americans most notably to increase  
12 promotion and the availability of fruits and vegetables  
13 and other healthy but under-consumed foods to low-income  
14 families in the marketplace. Specific examples include  
15 implement market-based food stamp retail innovations such  
16 as bonus value food stamps for customers buying fruits  
17 and vegetables, removing the restriction against offering  
18 special sale prices for healthy foods to food stamp  
19 customers, and allowing states to exceed federal  
20 nutrition standards for food stamp certified retailers as  
21 is allowed with WIC; require that certified farmers  
22 markets in low-income areas be equipped to redeem food  
23 stamp benefits or electronic benefit transfer and  
24 strengthen WIC and senior farmers market programs; allow  
25 FSNE to support statewide farm-to-school and

1 community-supported agriculture programs that develop and  
2 increase direct marketing opportunities to small farmers  
3 and related businesses especially in low-income and  
4 children's food service venues; recalculate the cost of  
5 the USDA thrifty food plan to include the healthier foods  
6 required by the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans  
7 especially fresh fruits and vegetables; promptly  
8 implement Institute of Medicine recommendations to add  
9 fruits and vegetables to the WIC food package, expand the  
10 Free Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program to all states,  
11 including California; and authorize Specialty Crop Block  
12 Grant funds to state agriculture departments, including  
13 for statewide promotion of fruits and vegetables to the  
14 general public through efforts such as the California 5 a  
15 Day for Better Health Campaign. Thank you for your time  
16 and consideration of the Public Health Institute's  
17 recommendations.

18 ALLEN NG: We're going to take a break for ten  
19 minutes. Please be back in ten minutes.

20 (Recess.)

21 KELLY ROBINSON: Good morning. My name is  
22 Kelly Robinson. I'm pleased to come before you as a  
23 representative of the Alameda County Office of  
24 Education, Health and Nutrition Education Program and as  
25 a representative of the students of North Oakland

1 Community School. Over the last several years, program  
2 planners, teachers and students have used FSNE funding  
3 to design and implement nutrition education programs  
4 through which students learn how to eat healthier by  
5 teaching other community members how to do the same.

6 Our innovative service learning project is to  
7 engage our high school students as nutrition educators in  
8 their community. Last year they hosted a series of  
9 healthy eating workshops for low-income K through third  
10 grade students. This year we're working as public  
11 educators to help elderly populations learn about  
12 community garden sites in their neighborhood.

13 We found that delivering nutrition education  
14 through effective strategy to actively engage young  
15 people in the issues of improved personal and community  
16 health through better nutrition. This morning I have  
17 four students with me today who participated in these  
18 programs over the years and who would like to share a  
19 little about what they have learned about how to take  
20 better care of themselves and members of their community.  
21 I have with me Kanisha Patterson, Sierra Evans, Christina  
22 Almond, and Britney Lambert and they'll come out and make  
23 brief statements. Thank you very much

24 KANISHA PATTERSON: Good morning. My name is  
25 Kanisha Patterson. The program makes me think all of

1 the time about what I am eating and what effect it will  
2 have on my body. I have learned that the community is  
3 related to what we eat. Disease is related to bad  
4 eating habits, smoking and no physical activity. I do  
5 not want to suffer from a diet-related disease.

6 So I'm I am trying to be more careful about what  
7 I eat, living to share what I know with other people. We  
8 are taught that this is our responsibility as citizens to  
9 improve the lives of others. I believe this and I get a  
10 lot of looking forward to learning more and helping  
11 others to learn more about how we can stay healthy in  
12 this world of disease. Thanks.

13 SIERRA EVANS: My name is Sierra Evans. And I  
14 helped to plan the services for children this year. I  
15 had a role in deciding what we were going to do, what we  
16 were going to teach the children and what kind of things  
17 we will give them to remind them to eat healthy. They  
18 enjoyed the scavenger hunt and the garden. Every  
19 student got to be involved in the program. Everyone had  
20 a teller that we used to make the workshop work. Today  
21 we can look forward to eating healthier, looking  
22 healthier, and growing healthier. Thank you.

23 CHRISTINA ALMOND: Last year in our school I  
24 learned about how to teach children how to eat healthier  
25 food, including vegetables and fruit. I evaluated the

1 program and taught classes to the children. It is hard  
2 for children to eat healthier foods these days because  
3 there is so much food around us and at our schools  
4 stores and communities and it's not the best. In this  
5 program I am learning about how to think eat better and  
6 how to make better choices in my food.

7           The thing I remember most about the work last  
8 year is how young students came to our school and we  
9 worked with them together in our garden and helped them  
10 harvest healthy foods for them. We also helped them  
11 plant some of their vegetables in their gardens so they  
12 can watch them grow and pick them at their own garden.

13           This year I'll participate in the program again  
14 because I think that it gives me the opportunity to learn  
15 more about them and learn how to eat better foods and  
16 just think positive. That's all. Thank you so much.

17           BRITNEY LAMBERT: Thank you for the opportunity  
18 to speak this morning. I'm Britney Lambert. I'm also  
19 working as a student leader on the program. What I  
20 applied from this program is that your health and the  
21 way you eat can affect your life. I have learned the  
22 simplest things such as breakfast and eating one fruit  
23 every day can affect your energy in the classroom and  
24 participation in school. With this information I have  
25 used to my advantage and bettered myself physically and



1     mentally.

2                 I thank you and on behalf of my school who  
3     couldn't be here today they and I thank you for this  
4     wonderful program.

5                 ELLEN STRAUSS:  Ellen Strauss from San  
6     Francisco Food Bank.  I'm No. 17.  San Francisco Food  
7     Bank is a member of America's Second Harvest, the  
8     Nation's Food Bank Network, which I know you work very  
9     closely with.  Thank you very much for that close  
10    relationship and for all you have done in the wake of  
11    Katrina.  It's been a great partnership.  It's made me  
12    aware the network has already delivered more than a  
13    thousand truck loads of food into the gulf region.  That  
14    is all donated product that we're moving in addition to  
15    what you're moving into in commodities.

16                I want to talk about commodities for a second.  
17    Commodities really complement the donated food we use in  
18    the food banks and that we distribute.  TEFAP and CSFP, I  
19    think in the Farm Bill TEFAP continues to be strong, we  
20    continue to increase the funding for that and in the  
21    distribution and storage funds.  But the Commodity  
22    Supplemental Food Program, the poor stepchild as we have  
23    talked about before, it really needs to be fortified.

24                My recommendation and request is that you look  
25    at making that a mandatory program like TEFAP.  It is

1     mainly a senior program. In San Francisco we serve  
2     11,000 people only of which 200 are in the women, infant  
3     and children category. It is an important program for  
4     seniors who can come and get 30 to 40 pounds of food at  
5     one time and where they can get help carrying it home  
6     from their neighbors. This is important for them who  
7     cannot get out and buy food at grocery stores.

8             So we'd like to make this a mandatory program  
9     and fully fund it so we can serve all the seniors. Right  
10    now we're serving about half of who need it in San  
11    Francisco. Please take a look at that again. Looking at  
12    technology that can be used, in California we're  
13    definitely ahead of the curve on using technology to help  
14    streamline and make that system work.

15            I'm going to step back for a second on what's  
16    going on right now. We really need your leadership. You  
17    are a wonderful advocate. We really need you to continue  
18    to be that advocate for us in the anti-hunger community  
19    with the President and really show leadership right now  
20    to not have a mini Farm Bill this year. Reconciliation  
21    and the idea of trying to pay for Katrina on the backs of  
22    people who need the help the most is not the way to go.  
23    We need your help to continue to be that voice with the  
24    leadership and to make a difference.

25            So thank you very much and we appreciate your

1 support at the food bank.

2 BEVERLY BARONS: Good morning. I'm No. 18,  
3 Beverly Barons with the Department of Health and  
4 Welfare. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here  
5 today. I have a responsibility for the TEFAP program in  
6 the State of Idaho. I'm here today as a representative  
7 of the Western Regional TEFAP directors. We face  
8 increasing challenges every year. This year they are  
9 mounting rapidly. One commonality the Western states  
10 has is their sheer areas. Many distribution sites are  
11 located in remote rural locations and it's difficult to  
12 stretch the current limited administrative money for an  
13 entire fiscal year. With soaring prices, it taxes these  
14 limited funds even further because it costs more to  
15 deliver food across our states to remote locations.

16 In addition, the increased cost for delivery,  
17 sky rocketing energy prices means higher cost for storage  
18 of the goods until they can be distributed. The overall  
19 cost of running our program has increased significantly  
20 while our administrative funding has not. We're also  
21 requesting consideration of increased entitlement funds  
22 and bonus commodities. Increased numbers of participants  
23 are coming through our doors for food. These are the  
24 working poor families, the disabled senior citizens, and  
25 the homeless, our most vulnerable population.

1           These are especially hard times on those with  
2   paid jobs and fixed incomes. Their dollars are  
3   purchasing less. Their food stamps are purchasing less.  
4   Now we have the added concerns of potential cuts in the  
5   Food Stamp Program.

6           TEFAP will become a resource looked to by those  
7   who have to this point been scraping by. TEFAP does not  
8   provide food for families to live on. The amount they  
9   received stop gap measure to allow families to stretch  
10  their limited resources. It's increasingly difficult to  
11  put a well-balanced meal on the table. As an example  
12  Idaho received approximately \$525,000 this past year in  
13  entitlement funds for commodities serving approximately  
14  32,000 individuals.

15          Because of our limited entitlement funds if our  
16  six community action agencies who distribute our  
17  commodities in Idaho were each to order a half of a truck  
18  load of beef, that would represent 36 percent of  
19  entitlement for the year. So we looked to providing as a  
20  means of protein the peanut butter and beans because we  
21  can get more for our money.

22          There's a hunger crisis in our country and we  
23  have a responsibility to do whatever we can to alleviate  
24  this crisis. TEFAP is not the sole answer but it is a  
25  vital program for those who are hungry. As congress

1 looks for ways to fund these increases for TEFAP we ask  
2 that they consider utilizing Section 32 funds for  
3 increased administrative costs. Thank you.

4 JERRY SANDERS: Hi. My name is Jerry Sanders.  
5 In a previous lifetime I was a food stamp eligibility  
6 worker. I think if we want to increase food stamp  
7 participation it must be in cooperation with community  
8 based organizations. I'll show you a project that I  
9 have in Orange County called Food Stamps in Four Hours  
10 and show you how we have actually helped to resolve the  
11 four major barriers. Those of transportation, child  
12 care, the time it takes to process the whole thing, and  
13 the public charge issue.

14 I also manage the CSFP program in Orange County.  
15 We distribute food to 23,000 people each month. So they  
16 already have that trust in us. If those were multiple  
17 locations my food stamp outreach worker access is those  
18 very participants who have already been able to get to  
19 those sites conveniently. We pick them up there on the  
20 day of their workshops along with their kids, take them  
21 to a non-County facility where we complete the food stamp  
22 application from beginning to end. About 9:00 o'clock  
23 the food stamp eligibility worker shows up at that site,  
24 completes the official part of the process. We put the  
25 clients back on our bus with their children, take them to

1 the county office for the finger imaging process. And  
2 we're done. That program is called Food Stamps in Four  
3 Hours.

4 What I propose is that sometime down the line we  
5 take a look at community based organizations like mine  
6 being able to partner with part of the certification  
7 process. When I was at ET I know there were clients we  
8 used to call slam dunks, people coming in who were  
9 clearly eligible for food stamps. The process could  
10 takes about that long but most of them have to wait the  
11 same amount. Some time I propose we be given some kind  
12 of nod of authority in the process that we have been  
13 working with Orange County on for some time to actually  
14 complete that certification process at those remote  
15 locations.

16 And with all due respect if we do get that nod  
17 we would exchange the name of this program from Food  
18 Stamps in Four Hours to Food Stamps in 40 Minutes. I  
19 don't believe it should ever take longer than 40 minutes  
20 to complete the food stamp process. Thank you.

21 SARAH STONE-FRANCISCO: Hello. I'm Sarah  
22 Stone-Francisco. I'm No. 20. I run a research  
23 evaluation and policy consulting firm based here in  
24 Oakland. Before I make my comments I want to thank you  
25 for coming and listening to people's experiences across

1 the country. That's very important.

2 So the one recommendation that I want to make  
3 that the Farm Bill include the development of a research  
4 agenda that really goes beyond the specific nutrient  
5 focused research that looks primarily how the components  
6 of food affect health to really a research agenda that  
7 focuses or includes more on how the health benefits of  
8 fruits and vegetables affect the whole health.

9 Furthermore, I'd like to recommend that the  
10 research agenda include focus on researching consumer  
11 behavior to assess the barriers of increasing the  
12 consumption of fruits and vegetables. I think the  
13 results from this expanded research focus will greatly  
14 assist USDA advocates and the entire nation's efforts in  
15 the driving forward of healthier eating patterns. Thank  
16 you.

17 ANGELA MARTIN: Good morning. Thank you so  
18 much for taking the time to hear my testimony today.  
19 And thank you for all that you're receiving today. I  
20 know it's a lot of information. I'm Angela Martin. I'm  
21 representing Oregon Food Bank. Oregon Food Bank is at  
22 the hub of statewide network of 800 hunger relief  
23 agencies. We collect food from public and private  
24 sources and distribute it to 20 regional food banks  
25 throughout our state and Clark County, Washington. We

1 also work to eliminate causes of hunger through advocacy  
2 and education.

3 A primary source of that work is increasing  
4 participation in our Food Stamp Program. It's been  
5 successful. We credit food stamps for our recent  
6 improvements in the percentage of people who experience  
7 hunger in Oregon. As you know we have consistently  
8 ranked among the top ten states in the nation for hunger,  
9 and we have begun to make improvements in that number.  
10 As we have made improvements in that number, we have also  
11 seen 70 percent increase in the number of people  
12 receiving and participating in food stamps. That's from  
13 2000 up to 2004.

14 Many of those families who are newly  
15 participating in this program are the working families.  
16 And we have to look back to the 2002 Farm Bill and thank  
17 many of the policies adopted at that time and implemented  
18 by our State Department of Human Services for bringing so  
19 many more working families into the program.

20 I come here today with many of those working  
21 families silently standing behind me. One of those  
22 families is Ron and Ruby Stoker and their five children.  
23 They live in Junction City, Oregon. He works in middle  
24 management for a manufacturing company that manufactures  
25 luxury motor coaches. He's worked there for over 12



1 years. They rely on the \$155 a month worth of food  
2 stamps to continue to put food on their table. Despite  
3 working they simply are not making newspaper money to  
4 make ends meet.

5 Because of programs with categorical eligibility  
6 food stamps is there to take care of that family. That's  
7 why I lead off with our recommendations. We must not  
8 only protect categorical eligibility and some of the  
9 asset disregards that have been allowed. But let's  
10 expand that to other states so working families across  
11 this nation can begin to benefit from this program.

12 The other family that's standing behind me today  
13 is a woman named Patricia. I met Patricia just a few  
14 weeks ago when I was doing my own round of listening  
15 sessions across the state. I met hundreds of people who  
16 experience hunger and poverty every day. Patricia was a  
17 woman who as I passed around the food to start off the  
18 conversation -- because I think most conversations should  
19 start with food -- she grabbed the peach and looked at  
20 this peach and said oh, my goodness, this is the first  
21 peach I have had all summer. Peaches cost two dollars.  
22 I cannot afford a two dollar peach. She ate that peach  
23 with such joy that I realized that we need to redouble  
24 our efforts to make sure that in August is not the first  
25 time that someone is picking up a peach to enjoy.

1           I had that same conversation with children out  
2   in Ontario, Oregon who talked me about one of their  
3   favorite things. That was making fresh fruit slurpees  
4   and smoothies. It was such a treat they had to save up  
5   to do this. That idea that it wasn't soda pop and chips  
6   that they wanted to go do. They were saving their money  
7   for fresh fruit.

8           So the recommendation of increasing that basic  
9   food stamp benefit and aligning the benefit amount to  
10  include new cost of a healthy diet which fresh fruits and  
11  vegetables are at the cornerstone of.

12          I want to end with two additional thoughts.  
13  First I want to end with a quote that I'm carrying from  
14  both of our senators, Senator Gordon Smith and Senator  
15  Ron Widen who recently have taken a renewed leadership in  
16  supporting the Food Stamp Program. Their quote begins  
17  with: The Federal Food Stamp Program is one of our  
18  nation's best defenses against hunger. Insuring basic  
19  nutrition to our most vulnerable children, elderly  
20  disabled, and the legions of hard-working low-income  
21  Americans is an investment in the health of our nation.

22          And that's where I end. It's an investment.  
23  Not that we ask how do we afford it, but we ask that we  
24  must afford it. Thank you very much

25          ERIC BOST: Where are you physically located in

1 Oregon?

2 ANGELA MARTIN: Portland, Oregon, but this has  
3 been a summer of being on the road to almost every  
4 corner.

5 ERIC BOST: You know we're having a forum in  
6 Portland.

7 ANGELA MARTIN: You'll see me again there.

8 PATTY WHITNEY-WISE: And continuing that Oregon  
9 voice, I'm Patty Whitney Wise with the Oregon Hunger  
10 Relief Task Force. I'm No. 22. We will be making sure  
11 that some of those voices that Angela is speaking are at  
12 the Portland forum, that you'll hear from people on the  
13 Food Stamp Program and their experiences. I'm going to  
14 mention just a few administrative things, a couple you  
15 have heard before. We will be providing you with  
16 detailed information about the changes we would like to  
17 see happen.

18 As you know we have had a great increase in the  
19 Food Stamp Program. As Angela mentioned it has decreased  
20 hunger in our state. What's not decreased is food  
21 insecurity. That's where the categorical eligibility  
22 comes in. Many of the families in Oregon and Washington  
23 while we have higher hunger rates and lower poverty  
24 rates, the difference for us from other states is that we  
25 have a lot more two-parent working families, families

1     working full-time that are still food insecure. It has  
2     to do with high housing cost, healthcare cost, child care  
3     cost. So food stamps in that categorical eligibility  
4     piece where we can serve families up to 185 percent of  
5     poverty has been critical in reaching those families that  
6     are very much in need and many of whom are newly  
7     struggling to put food on the table.

8             Just a few things that are very important for us  
9     besides expanding categorical eligibility nationwide. We  
10    feel very strongly the minimum benefit needs to be raised  
11    to \$25. It hasn't been raised in a long time for seniors  
12    and other people who are right on the edge. That would  
13    be enough we feel to make it worth their while of going  
14    through the process of getting food stamps.

15            We have high child care costs. You heard that  
16    from somebody else. We have some suggestions on raising  
17    the child care deduction so that families receive more  
18    food stamps. We have a couple of recommendations around  
19    how to simplify the program. We would get rid of the  
20    ABAWD laws, the immigrant laws, make it more the program  
21    that it was before where if you're income eligible you  
22    can receive benefits.

23            The rules are so complex. This is one of the  
24    reasons we have so many costs in administration and  
25    staffing. It's difficult to certify somebody for food

1 stamps. As you know, our error rate in Oregon has been  
2 fairly high too. We have been able to bring it down  
3 significantly in the last couple of years leading to the  
4 other recommendation that there be changes in how that  
5 error rate is calculated making a set standard by which  
6 states are aiming for rather than moving targets. And  
7 part of the reason for that is states can be very  
8 successful at lowering error rates by denying benefits to  
9 people. So they have low error rates but not very many  
10 people participating.

11 As you know we have one of the highest  
12 participation rates in the country. Subsequently and  
13 because working families tend to be the ones that are  
14 error prone we have had more of that error. We're  
15 bringing it down significantly. I think we're finally  
16 going to get out of penalty, but because the target keeps  
17 moving it's hard for us to meet that target even though  
18 they have been very successful.

19 What I'd like to say in terms of offsets in the  
20 program for these changes that would increase  
21 participation. If you simplify the program like doing  
22 categorical eligibility for everybody that simplifies  
23 things for families too. Then they know if they're  
24 eligible for school meals or WIC, they're also eligible  
25 for food stamps. It really does simplify things across

1 program areas.

2           So then too in closing one would be that  
3 families who are under 22 living with their parents if  
4 they really are a separate household should really be  
5 able to get food stamps. And there was one more real  
6 quick. I'm going forget it, but we'll make sure our  
7 folks bring it up for you in the Portland hearing as  
8 well. Oh, I know. Sorry.

9           We have had problems with Vista and Americore.  
10 In Americore you automatically can be eligible for food  
11 stamps. In Vista it's only if you apply before you  
12 actually become in Vista. If you apply after you're in  
13 Vista, your income counts. If you could align those two,  
14 again, simplification, so that Vistas are treated the  
15 same as Americore volunteers when it comes to food stamps  
16 that would be a wonderful thing. Thank you so much.

17           DAVID GOODMAN: Good morning, Under Secretary  
18 Bost and other members of the Farm Bill Health Bill  
19 Forum. I am No. 23. My name is David Goodman. And I'm  
20 the executive director of the Redwood Empire Food Bank  
21 which is located 55 miles north of San Francisco in  
22 Sonoma County. We serve an area 320 miles north along  
23 the coast of California to the Oregon border. The  
24 Redwood Empire Food Bank is one of many food banks that  
25 make it the safety net for low-income Californians. We

1 are a proud member of the California Association of Food  
2 Banks who now distributes approximately 118 meals  
3 annually reaching more than 5,000 community  
4 organizations and 2 million individuals and families.

5 I have come here this morning to make one  
6 significant request on behalf of low-income seniors. As  
7 a commodity supplemental food provider, the Redwood  
8 Empire Food Bank provides 2400 seniors every month with a  
9 CSFP box. My request is asking for a commitment to  
10 expand CSFP and to make the program available to all  
11 qualified seniors in all communities in all states in the  
12 union.

13 To summarize that, the vision to make CSFP the  
14 cornerstone of what would be a senior nutrition title. I  
15 would like to remind the members of the forum or inform  
16 in case you don't know that the senior population in the  
17 United States is growing. As an example in Sonoma County  
18 people between the ages of 65 and 70 years old will  
19 increase by 153 percent in the next 15 years. What that  
20 means is that there will be an increase from 14,500  
21 seniors to 36,700 seniors in 15 years.

22 Pretty staggering. Just adding to the gravity  
23 of that statistic is the fact that 64 percent of the  
24 seniors that we serve report that Social Security is  
25 their sole source of income. All of us have been told

1 all our lives that Social Security isn't going to be  
2 around, but I'd be willing to bet that everybody in this  
3 room would never imagine themselves standing in a food  
4 line when they thought that social security wasn't going  
5 to be there for them

6           The face of hunger has changed over the years.  
7 A few years back we were always talking about the  
8 homeless. And then suddenly hunger grabbed a hold of the  
9 working poor. To be sure, hunger has not let go of the  
10 working poor. It hasn't let go of the homeless. Instead  
11 it has simply reached out with its other hand and has now  
12 grabbed hold of seniors in our communities.

13           As hunger relief workers, administrators and  
14 policy makers, we must think about how each person is  
15 impacted by insufficient funding and ineffective  
16 legislation on behalf of the concerned citizens who would  
17 like to see an end of hunger and more importantly the 2  
18 million Californians who receive food from California  
19 Food Banks, I am asking for your commitment to expand  
20 CSFP and making the program available to all qualified  
21 seniors in all communities in all states in the union.

22           I have two final thoughts for you. It is often  
23 said that children are our future. Well, in this case  
24 taking care of hungry seniors today and tomorrow -- we  
25 are the future, everyone here in this room, because the



1 fact is today's children will never get there. Not only  
2 are today's seniors but everybody in this room except for  
3 maybe a couple will already be too old. So we are the  
4 solution for today and tomorrow, not today's children.

5 Finally, I understand that you have to weigh off  
6 everything, Under Secretary Bost, in your decisions. I  
7 have seen you testify in Washington D.C. under the heat  
8 of the U.S. House of Representatives. I know the process  
9 can be trying. However, this is an important issue and I  
10 think you can have a tremendous impact. You are in a  
11 unique position.

12 If you don't mind, I heard a quote yesterday  
13 that resonated well with me from Dr. Martin Luther King  
14 who said: You need to irritate the oyster in order to  
15 get a pearl. I would argue in this case that CSFP is the  
16 pearl and the United States Congress is the oyster. So  
17 please remember that.

18 JESSICA BARTHLOW: Hi. Good morning. I'm  
19 Jessica Bartholow. And I am with the California  
20 Association of Food Banks. I am the coordinator for  
21 Food Stamp Outreach. I have had the opportunity to work  
22 with the regional office here, and I would just like to  
23 commend you all for a great staff, very professional  
24 staff that you have here that take your job very  
25 seriously, and we're lucky to work with them.

1           I want to add to my colleague's comments about  
2   the food stamps. I'll be talking to you about EFAP and  
3   the food bank and the nutrition programs. I want to say  
4   that food stamps make America stronger. It really takes  
5   a Farm Bill to make America's families strong enough.  
6   One of the other components in the Farm Bill will be  
7   funding for nutrition education programs through the Food  
8   Stamp Program. We want to ask you to continue to the  
9   great work you're doing around that and expanding  
10   projects around nutrition education.

11           I also want to encourage you to consider  
12   including funding for that that would allow families not  
13   only to know what foods are nutritious but where they can  
14   go to get those foods. Research shows that the food  
15   stamp allotment is not enough for a heart healthy diet.  
16   Research has come out this year from the American Heart  
17   Association showing that the Food Stamp plan is not  
18   enough for a heart healthy diet.

19           So families need to have everything that the  
20   USDA can offer them, all the programs the USDA offers  
21   them to be able to insure a heart healthy diet for their  
22   family. That includes access to summer lunch programs,  
23   school lunch programs, commodity food programs. And  
24   currently the nutrition education dollars in the next  
25   fiscal year might not be able to be used for that. I

1 would encourage you to think in this Farm Bill how could  
2 we include in the nutrition education message messaging  
3 that allows families to find that healthy food.

4 And in addition use that nutrition ed dollar to  
5 insure that those programs are providing healthy foods.  
6 Just because a family knows where to get a summer lunch  
7 doesn't mean that they know where to get a healthy summer  
8 lunch that has the fruits and vegetables that they need  
9 for a heart healthy diet. So those would be the two  
10 comments that I have about the Nutrition Education  
11 Program and how you can expand on the great work that  
12 you're doing in that area.

13 On the same vein, the food banks are out there  
14 also with the Commodity Food Program, and we think that  
15 those foods could be healthier as well. So we'd like to  
16 encourage you to think about the commodity food package  
17 and think about how that could be expanded to provide a  
18 more healthy box of food for the families and also to  
19 expand vulnerability of the bonus commodities. This does  
20 really make a difference. If you ever have seen the  
21 difference a bag that has the bonus commodity and the  
22 bags that don't, the bags that have the commodity you can  
23 tell how that's going to round out the family's meals.  
24 It really does make a difference.

25 In addition, we would encourage you to think

1 about better funding of the distribution of the EFAP.  
2 The funding for the storage and the distribution does not  
3 currently support all the costs of those. Right now food  
4 banks are required to get subsidies from their community  
5 to support the distribution of the EFAP, the government  
6 food. This would help a lot if this was better funded.  
7 Finally, California is looking at a project called Farm  
8 to School. For as little as a million dollars here in  
9 our state we can make a huge difference to make sure food  
10 doesn't rot in the field, that it ends up in the hands of  
11 children in Oregon and on tables of elderly in the  
12 Redwood Empire.

13 We think a very small investment funding under  
14 Section 32 that this kind of project could happen. It  
15 can be really exciting. I think everybody, farmers and  
16 low-income families will benefit. Thank you again for  
17 your ingenuity and I guess your commitment really to  
18 these families and these programs. Thank you.

19 ALLISON PAT: Good morning. Almost good  
20 afternoon. I'm Allison Pat. I work right here in  
21 Oakland at the Alameda County Community Food Bank. I'd  
22 also like to thank you very much for taking the time to  
23 come and look at all our recommendations today. I have  
24 just two very brief points that I would like to make  
25 about access to food stamps. The first point concerns

1 the importance of maintaining the Food Stamp Program as  
2 an entitlement program when this is reauthorized in  
3 2007.

4 As our nation's first defense against hunger,  
5 the Food Stamp Program needs to remain flexible in times  
6 of crisis, not just economic crisis, but also in response  
7 to national disasters such as hurricane Katrina. We all  
8 saw how quickly affected households were able to access  
9 food stamps and it was great to see. It is so important  
10 that the structure of this program remain flexible so  
11 that food stamps can be responsive to people who are  
12 hungry.

13 The second point I would look to make is to  
14 underscore the importance of facilitating and increasing  
15 access to the Food Stamp Program for immigrants. On  
16 behalf of our food bank, I would like to thank the USDA  
17 for a grant that was given to us to do food stamp  
18 outreach to immigrant populations. This grant and the  
19 outreach work that we're able to do at our food bank is  
20 really part of our success story here in Alameda County.  
21 Yes, our participation rates are low, but I'd like to  
22 reiterate what Julie from the county said earlier. In  
23 the past two years our non-assistance food stamp case  
24 loads have increased by almost 42 percent, and that's  
25 just thrilling to us.

1           Also to reiterate Julie once again one barrier  
2 we have really identified is this whole issue of  
3 sponsorship. We would also recommend a five-year time  
4 limit when it comes to sponsored deeming as opposed to a  
5 lifetime limit which we currently have. Thank you once  
6 again for taking the time to listen.

7           SANDRA LUHAN: My name is Sandra Luhan. I come  
8 from the Tucson Community. One of the ten who got the  
9 \$125,000 for food stamp education. I'm a family  
10 advocate. And everything that everyone has said is part  
11 of what we do at the food bank every day in Tucson. We  
12 distribute 36,000 meals every day. We use 500 agencies  
13 in which to do this. Out of all that food that goes out  
14 every day of the year we are only reaching about  
15 22 percent of all of the county which is one of the  
16 largest counties in Arizona.

17           I couldn't leave here without being the voice of  
18 some of the families that we go out and talk to on a  
19 daily basis. So I thought that that would be important.  
20 I'm not going to talk about policy or percentages or  
21 anything like that, but I thought it would be important  
22 to hear voices of people that I speak to every day. A  
23 while back I met a woman who was a 69-year-old Caucasian  
24 woman who was retired. She was twice now diagnosed with  
25 cancer and decided that as a last resort after not being

1 eligible for food stamps, she would call food bank and  
2 ask for a food box. I went down there and I thought this  
3 can be a mistake. So I went down there with a food stamp  
4 application. And she said, no, I definitely am not  
5 eligible. I make \$900 a month. I'm not eligible for  
6 food stamps. I'm actually paying back an overpayment of  
7 \$200, and I can only afford \$5.00 a month. So I'm trying  
8 to pay that off as quickly as possible.

9           She said by the 20th of every month I'm out of  
10 food. I don't qualify for food stamps. I have to decide  
11 whether this month I'm going to buy medicine, go to see  
12 my chemotherapist or decide whether I'm going to even be  
13 able to afford to do radiation. As I sat there, I didn't  
14 really know what to say to her except that we would be  
15 glad to deliver boxes of food, emergency boxes. She said  
16 I'm very scared of what's happening to seniors. I told  
17 her that I would be coming here and that I would make  
18 sure that her story would be told.

19           She said the one good thing about chemotherapy  
20 is that once I start chemo again I won't have the need to  
21 have as much food because I won't be able to keep the  
22 food down that I need to keep down. That was very  
23 difficult for me to hear.

24           That's one story. We hear a lot of stories  
25 every day about immigrants in this country who may or may

1 not have legal status but their children are U.S. born  
2 citizens who are having a hard time having food every day  
3 on the table, and they're picking which family member  
4 doesn't eat that night so children will go to school with  
5 food in their bellies. When we go in and talk about food  
6 stamps again I know the public charge issue has been  
7 brought up. But we also have the other problem of  
8 Proposition 200 which is keeping eligible children who  
9 are going to school hungry without food.

10           So we need to be better about kind of squashing  
11 the fear down that public charges will keep people from  
12 even being able to become citizens or just the fear  
13 within itself. I'm just going to be truthful and say  
14 that because we are so heavily populated with immigrants  
15 in our state that a lot of times even -- it's a  
16 personal -- I have even been in there with eligibility  
17 workers who will say to some of our families well, you  
18 have to be careful with this especially now since  
19 homeland security is finger printing. There's a good  
20 chance that it might happen to you. Getting help with  
21 food stamp benefits might keep you from becoming a  
22 citizen or immigration could go to pick you up. So  
23 that's the truth here in Arizona

24           Also I would like to say that when folks get  
25 denied benefits that we really try to work on letters



1     that they get of denial. Every day folks could read  
2     these and understand what's going on and have the  
3     knowledge nothing they can go back and appeal this  
4     process because many people get letters. They don't  
5     understand what they say so they just toss them and say  
6     oh, well, we just didn't qualify. If they had some  
7     representation they might actually know that they do  
8     qualify for food stamps.

9             One more thing before I sit down. In Arizona,  
10    yes, we still do have some unions and it is my  
11    responsibility to go out there and talk to union members  
12    when they're going on strike and talk about food stamps  
13    and realizing that most union members do not qualify for  
14    food stamps. So I was also asked by the group of people  
15    who were just striking in the Sarco Copper Mine that you  
16    would rethink the policy for food stamps for strikers.  
17    Thank you very much for your time.

18            GREG DRYER: I'm 27. If only it were true. I  
19    feel a little out of place today which is totally  
20    unusual for me because my comments aren't directed at  
21    nutrition or food stamps. Actually they're directed at  
22    the dairy title of the Farm Bill for 2007. I have heard  
23    a lot of comments just now about affordability of food.  
24    And I would make a point that the orientation of the  
25    Farm Bill often is toward the profession of the farmer

1 and sometimes that runs counter to the best interest for  
2 the food for the consumers especially low-income people.

3 My name is Greg Dryer. I'm executive vice  
4 president of administration for Saputo Cheese U.S.A. We  
5 employ about 1800 people in 14 plants across the United  
6 States using the volume of milk produced by about 2,000  
7 average size American dairy farms. We have two plants  
8 here in California that buy a little over a billion  
9 pounds of milk a year.

10 I have to confess I have had some experience in  
11 speaking for two minutes or less having been married for  
12 35 years. I only have 25 years experience in the dairy  
13 industry. But having just returned from the World Dairy  
14 Summit in Vancouver, I have never been more optimistic  
15 about our prospects for the future. Demand for dairy  
16 products is increasing and price levels have been rising.  
17 With higher pricing we have gone through extreme  
18 volatility. So we need tools such as forward contracting  
19 to better manage our businesses through temporary periods  
20 of abnormal crisis.

21 To me no one in good conscience can argue that  
22 these tools should be available to just some farmers and  
23 not others. Regulation itself can impede progress. It  
24 was my impression at the World Dairy Summit that the  
25 least content of the farmers came from the most regulated

1 of countries, Canada. And while their milk prices are  
2 among the highest in the world, the demand for product is  
3 stagnant. And their prospects for competing in the new  
4 global market will be daunting.

5           The business environment here in the United  
6 States is more competitive than our neighbor to the  
7 north. Through July our skim milk powder exports have  
8 doubled over last year because of market demands. To  
9 continue to grow our position in the world market place  
10 we need to decrease regulation. It should be the free  
11 market that establishes the price of our milk, not  
12 regulation. Even now each year our company pays tens of  
13 millions of dollars above the federally regulated minimum  
14 price to U.S. dairy farmers and their cooperatives in  
15 order to be competitive.

16           We strongly believe farmers deserve a safety net  
17 given the disproportionate risk they take relative to the  
18 weather and government policy impacts on their  
19 businesses. But it should be a single coordinated policy  
20 that doesn't disrupt the marketplace and takes fairness  
21 into account for farmers, consumers and processes alike.  
22 Thank you for the opportunity to express our opinion and  
23 we take great pride in our company and our industry, and  
24 we sincerely appreciate your efforts on our behalf.

25           MIKE KOHANI: I'm 28. I'm Mike Kohani

1 (phonetic). I'm from the State of Hawaii Office of  
2 Community Services. I just wanted to support Judy  
3 Lenthall's testimony on the Hawaii Senior Farmers Market  
4 Nutrition Program. I'm actually in town for a Western  
5 Regional Office TEFAP meeting. So I wasn't expecting to  
6 be up here. I'm not too fond of public speaking. But  
7 I'd rather make a fool of myself up here than have Judy  
8 mad at me.

9 But in addition to that, this issue is very  
10 important for the State of Hawaii. As Judy said the  
11 proposed rule of a \$50 limit per participant for the  
12 Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program will severely  
13 cripple the program in the State of Hawaii. I have  
14 personally worked with Kauai Food Bank, and I know and I  
15 have observed the program firsthand, and I know the  
16 positive impact it is having in our state for low-income  
17 seniors.

18 Therefore, I just hope that Judy's heartfelt  
19 testimony will be recognized and considered by the USDA.  
20 And that's about it. Thank you very much.

21 MELISSA ORTIZ-GRAY: My name is Melissa  
22 Ortiz-Gray. I'm representing the California Nevada  
23 Community Action Partnership on behalf of our executive  
24 director, Tim Reese, who was unable to be here this  
25 morning. This is a statewide anti-poverty organization

1    made up of 52 community action agencies across  
2    California. Collectively we serve over 4 million  
3    low-income Californians by helping them to achieve  
4    self-sufficiency through a multitude of programs  
5    including the Food Stamp Program, the Emergency Food  
6    Assistance Program, the Commodity Supplemental Food  
7    Program and Seniors Farmers Market Program.

8            As an advocacy organization we know that the  
9    strength of these programs is that they work. The  
10   accomplishments include alleviation of poverty and  
11   assisting and achieving self-sufficiency. Therefore, we  
12   support full funding of these programs to California's  
13   most vulnerable citizens. Opportunities for improvement  
14   include easing eligibility rules and simplifying the  
15   application process. The utilization of new technology  
16   at the local level can reduce payment errors and  
17   administrative costs.

18           These nutrition programs are vital to secure our  
19   nation's health. Dollars invested in these programs pay  
20   off through significant reduction in health costs, future  
21   health costs, greater success in academic performance,  
22   job achievement and so on. Additional funding is  
23   critical. As a nation we must question the wisdom of  
24   extending tax cuts for the wealthiest while risking the  
25   health and wellbeing of the least among us. Thanks for

1     having us here this morning.

2                 GARY GRAYSON: I'm 30. And I think I'm the  
3     last one. My name is Gary Grayson. I administer the  
4     California Emergency Food Assistance Program. In the  
5     past I have also administered the Commodity Program for  
6     the schools and also the Commodity Supplemental Food  
7     Program. In addition, I'm a past president of American  
8     Commodity Distribution Association.

9                 I'm going to talk to you on two commodity  
10    programs, the TEFAP program and Commodity Supplemental  
11    Food program. We have seen a large increase in the  
12    number of people that we're serving through the food  
13    banks while at the same time we're experiencing a  
14    decrease in the amount of commodities being provided.  
15    While entitlement commodities have remained pretty  
16    constant, bonus commodities we have seen a significant  
17    decline over the past couple years.

18                Two years ago here in California we were  
19    receiving close to 100 million pounds of bonus  
20    commodities annually. Currently it's around 50 million.  
21    So there's a significant reduce in what we're receiving.  
22    There's also been concerns about the nutritional value of  
23    what's being provided to the low-income families and the  
24    homeless in addition to the school children around  
25    nation. One thing that I would propose is in the 2002

1 Farm Bill there was an initiative which was called the  
2 Farm-to-School initiative that provided funding to move  
3 more commodities from the farms directly to the schools.

4 I would suggest that the Farm Bill consider a  
5 similar program moving more commodities from the farms to  
6 the food banks. We have a lot of surplus commodities out  
7 there that are not being utilized. The states don't have  
8 the administrative capacity to collect all these  
9 salvageable commodities and sort and salvage and  
10 distribute them to the food banks. I would suggest  
11 consideration be given to using Section 32 funds, a  
12 portion of those funds. Some of the previous speakers  
13 discussed that even a small amount, around \$10 million  
14 for the nation, would go a long ways to provide  
15 additional surplus commodities to low-income families and  
16 the homeless. And the right kind of commodities is what  
17 we're talking about is fresh fruits and vegetables.

18 On CSFP as Mr. Goodman mentioned earlier, it's a  
19 very under-funded, under-utilized program nationwide.  
20 Currently I believe there's about 35 of the 58 states  
21 that are using CSFP that can participate because it's a  
22 very limited case load program. Here in California we  
23 are able to participate in it but we only are able to  
24 participate in six areas of the state. And that's pretty  
25 common around the nation. Only small segments of the

1 states are being serviced when we really need to be  
2 providing it to the entire state, but there's not enough  
3 case load to support doing that nationwide.

4           There's a lot of -- in addition to being  
5 under-funded, there's a lot of regulatory issues with the  
6 CSFP program. First of all, at the state level to  
7 administer the program I'm provided \$30,000 to conduct  
8 annual reviews of all the food banks who participate to  
9 do all the commodity ordering and to do all the oversight  
10 of the programming, the claims reviews and collections.  
11 \$30,000 doesn't even pay for half of a support person let  
12 alone all the review aspects to the job.

13           That amount is a fixed rate in law that doesn't  
14 allow us to utilize additional funds. So that's  
15 something that really needs to be addressed is  
16 appropriate funding to administer the program. Another  
17 issue with CSFP is the ongoing issues it has with the WIC  
18 program where there are still concerns that dual  
19 participation between individuals that participate in  
20 CSFP and may also be eligible for WIC. I would say that  
21 this should be a dead issue at this point in time.

22           First of all, over the past five years CSFP has  
23 changed from a predominantly WIC program. It used to be  
24 about 80 percent of CSFP participation nationwide with  
25 WIC to currently it's 90 percent seniors. But we still



1 are concerned about dual participation. It's a huge  
2 administrative headache for the states to try and address  
3 that barrier.

4 ERIC BOST: End your comment.

5 GARY GRAYSON: My final comment would be that  
6 this is a predominantly senior program. We're dealing  
7 with a \$30 box of food. If we made it a completely  
8 senior program and let WIC take care of the width you  
9 would eliminate five of the six boxes that food banks  
10 have to provide inventory control on in their programs.  
11 So it would be a huge simplification of how the programs  
12 were operated.

13 (Exhibit No. 1 was marked for  
14 identification purposes by the court reporter.)

